



## Washington State Healthy Youth Survey 2006

### *Rationale and Description of Survey Content*

The 2006 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) contains questions about behaviors that result in unintentional and intentional injury (e.g., seat belt use, fighting and weapon carrying); physical activity and dietary behaviors (e.g., fruit and vegetable consumption); alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; and related risk and protective factors. Staff from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); the Department of Health (DOH); the Department of Social and Health Services' Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA); the Department of Community Trade, and Economic Development (CTED); and the Family Policy Council (FPC) have collaborated on the content of the survey.

The survey has two forms for Grades 8, 10 and 12, Form A and Form B. Form A primarily contains questions from the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors (WSSAHB). Form B primarily contains questions from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Both Forms A and B include a core set of 35 identical items. A third form, Form C, is for Grade 6.

This document describes the importance of and rationale for including each surveyed health risk behavior and presents a few sample survey questions related to each behavior. The sample questions appear on one or more of the three forms of the survey.

Optional questions about family relationships, harassment, dating violence, and abuse history will be on a perforated page that can be removed before survey administration. Examples of these optional questions are also included in this document. Students are free to not answer any question or questions, and both students and parents will have an opportunity to refuse participation in the survey administration.

#### **Core Questions**

Some basic demographic information (e.g., age, grade level, ethnic group, etc.) is necessary to ensure that the approximately 20,000 students participating in the state sample are generally representative of the statewide student population in these grades. In addition, basic background information allows for examination of trends and differences in these health risk behaviors among students of varying background characteristics.

Other core items of the Healthy Youth Survey measure cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use, and physical fighting. Tobacco use is considered the most important preventable cause of death in the United States, and many smokers begin smoking in adolescence. Alcohol use contributes to motor vehicle crashes, which are the leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds. Both alcohol and drug use (especially heavy use) are associated with other problem behaviors in youth such as school failure and delinquency. In the United States in 2001, seven out of ten deaths of youth and young adults aged 10 to 24 resulted from only four causes: motor vehicle crashes (31 percent),

other unintentional injuries (13 percent), homicide (15 percent), and suicide (12 percent; Anderson and Smith, 2003; WISQARS, n.d.).

Data from the Healthy Youth Survey can be used in local and state prevention and intervention program planning. Data will also be available to legitimate researchers and health officials to use in improving understanding of factors that influence adolescent health.

All analyses of students' responses are conducted without specific identification of individual students to ensure that anonymity is maintained throughout the survey effort. To further protect student anonymity, reports will not be produced for schools with less than 15 valid completed surveys per grade level.

Sample core questions include these:

- What grade are you in?
- How old are you?
- Which race do you consider yourself to be?
- During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?
- During the past 30 days, how many times did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property?

### **Unintentional and Intentional Injury Behaviors**

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for Washington citizens aged 1 to 44. Some of the target behaviors of interest in the Healthy Youth Survey are seat belt use, bicycle and motorcycle helmet use, and drinking and driving involvement. Intentional injury behaviors of interest include fighting, weapon carrying, and suicidal thoughts and feelings. The questions on feeling sad and suicidal are especially important to measure the effectiveness of suicide prevention programs. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds. The questions on injury behaviors are drawn from the WSSAHB (Form A) and the YRBS (Form B), and some of these injury behavior questions are core questions.

Reducing violent behaviors such as bullying, harassment, physical abuse, and dating violence is an important goal of state and local programs. Current federal and state goals for public health and education include the assurance of "safe and drug-free schools and communities" to promote student learning. The Healthy Youth Survey includes questions designed to determine the extent to which students engage in selected violent behaviors.

Sample injury behavior questions include these:

- During the past 30 days, how many times did you drive a car or other vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol?
- How often do kids at school threaten to hurt you physically?
- During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?

### **Physical Activity and Dietary Behaviors**

Exercise and physical activity have both immediate and long-term benefits. Proper nutrition is essential for health and well-being. The combination of moderate physical activity and proper nutrition contributes to maintaining a healthy weight.

Questions drawn from the YRBS measure physical activity and dietary behaviors. Sample items of this type include these:

On how many of the past 7 days did you exercise or participate in physical activity for at least 20 minutes that made you sweat and breathe hard, such as basketball, soccer, running, swimming laps, fast bicycling, fast dancing, or similar aerobic activities?  
During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat green salad?

### **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use**

One of the target behaviors of interest in the Healthy Youth Survey is the extent to which students have used and are using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Many of the same questions used in previous statewide surveys will again be employed here. Asking these questions again allows for both local and statewide assessments of changes in patterns of substance use over time for Washington's students and provides important data-based direction for prevention efforts both locally and across the state.

Sample alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use questions include these:

Have you ever smoked every day for 30 days?  
During the past 30 days, on how many days did you drink a glass, can or bottle of alcohol (beer, wine, wine coolers, hard liquor)?

### **Risk and Protective Factors**

Research has provided important information on attitudinal and behavioral factors that place students at great risk for violence and substance use and factors that provide protection against these unhealthy behaviors. The Healthy Youth Survey includes several questions that assess the degree to which risk and protective factors occur in the responding students. These questions relate to the students themselves, their peers, their families, their schools, and the communities in which they live. Responses to these questions from past survey administrations have highlighted the important relationships that guide school prevention and intervention programs across the state.

Sample risk and protective factor questions include these:

How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to smoke marijuana?  
How interesting are most of your courses to you?  
How old were you when you first smoked a whole cigarette?  
How often do your parents tell you they're proud of you for something you've done?

### **Access to School-Based Services**

Schools are increasingly perceived as a place for students to access a variety of services. When schools do provide these services, students must be aware of their availability. Therefore, the Healthy Youth Survey includes questions related to access to school-based services.

Sample service access questions include these:

Does your school provide a counselor, intervention specialist, or other school staff member for students to discuss problems with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs?  
If you had a question about alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, which one of the following would you most likely go to for information?